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A Multimedia Voyage into Space at Artplay

By Ruth Moore

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Space travel and art join forces in Artplay's aptly named "Kosmos.Love" show. **ARTPLAY**

If gazing at swirling star constellations and listening to the sounds of David Bowie's "Space Oddity" is your idea of an afternoon well spent, a trip to Artplay could be in order. The former factory complex, now a vibrant cultural venue, is hosting the celestially inspired exhibition "Kosmos.Love" through the end of the month.

The multimedia exhibition combines contemporary artwork, archival footage and creative video projections to immerse visitors in the infinite wonders of space. According to the exhibition's organizers, the various elements of "Kosmos. Love" reflect the diverse ways mankind has responded to the mysteries of the universe.

"The idea was to show the development of human perceptions of space," said Yasha Yavorskaya, the curator of the exhibition, in an interview with The Moscow Times. "We

decided on the time period from the late 19th to early 20th centuries — from the enthusiastic ideas of philosophers and artists to the conquest of different planets and the realities of the unending empty expanses around the earth."

It was Roscosmos, Russia's space agency, that approached Artplay with the idea for the exhibition. "Kosmos.Love" commemorates the 2016 "Year of Gagarin," an initiative to celebrate the Russian astronaut's historic flight in space 55 years ago. A parallel exhibition has been running for the past month in St. Petersburg.

In the first room of the exhibition hall visitors are invited to explore the utopian worlds imagined by avant-garde artists such as Malevich, Tatlin and Chashnik as well as the mathematical and philosophical quandaries that plagued thinkers of the 19th century.

Next, strap on your space boots and experience a tour of the International Space Station courtesy of a VR headset. The gallery worker recommended sitting down at this point — apparently 360-degree views of space have caused more than a few accidents by astonished visitors.

Further on you'll discover imaginative responses to the wonders of space from a number of contemporary artists. Following Gagarin's flight it became apparent that mankind wouldn't be forming new colonies on Mars anytime soon, but that hasn't stopped space from fueling the work of artists across every creative field.

From Alexandra Ivleva's "Kosmolovelas," a metal rocking chair in the shape of a green humanoid, to Marina Rudenko's "Arkhitektochnik," a sculpture made of interlocking stacked cuboids filled with neon liquids, the dark expanses of the universe have proven boundless in their ability to kindle interesting creative responses.

"Space is topic that has always inspired, and it still inspires people today — contemporary artists still draw inspiration from it," said Yavorskaya. "But at the heart of any space research is, most prominently, mankind's dream of flight."

It's this that you'll experience in the final multimedia room, where music, art and pulsing video projections transport you to a retro-futuristic experience of space. Settle down on a beanbag and enjoy distant galaxies, celestial graphics and crimson-colored astronauts ebb and flow before your eyes.

Sergei Volkov, an astronaut and the son of Alexander Volkov, the famed Soviet-era space hero, sang the praises of the exhibition when he visited: "It's important to go right through from the start to the end. There you finally you catch yourself thinking: 'everything around me is so interesting and beautiful' and in that moment, you forget about what is happening in the world beyond the exhibition.

While the utopian dream of life beyond this planet might be far off, this Moscow exhibition provides stargazers and art lovers with some well-timed celestial escapism.

"Kosmos.love" runs at Artplay through February 26.

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